



Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking

(Sample Skills Course)

Course Overview: The **Introduction to Kayaking** course is designed as a short program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and skill acquisition for entry level individuals in public, private, and commercial settings.

Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e., not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket*
8. Get on / off or in / out of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft*
10. Remount or reenter the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation

** To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Duration: 1 day

Course Location / Venue: Flat water, protected from wind, waves and outside boat traffic, with current less than 0.5 knots, and within swimming distance of shore.

Class Ratio: 5 Participants : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2

Instructor: Level 1 or higher ACA Instructors within their discipline.



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The following is a general summary of course content for the **Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance. The course content includes the [National On Water Standards for human powered craft](#). The full rubric for Level 1 can be found in the above link, pages 17-65.

Course Content

Introduction, Expectations, and Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student and instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary and site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA

Preparing to Depart:

- Discuss weather conditions, forecasts, and other environmental hazards (wind, water, weather, waves)
- Evaluate hazards to navigation
- Discuss importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
- Evaluate individual's ability, water comfort, and confidence prior to trip
- Warm up to reduce injury
- Make sure the boat is securely fastened to the car or racks, using proper tie downs, straps, or knots.
- Review proper techniques to safely lift and carry the kayak on shore
- Review life jackets appropriate for the operator's size, kayak, and activity, assuring all others in the group are properly wearing their life jacket
- Inspect the kayak and all safety equipment to meet state, federal, and local requirements for the vessel and activity
- Describe and follow safe boating practices (behavior, substance abuse, on water and land etiquette, leave no trace ethics)
- Review elements of a float plan (Who, What, When, Where, filing practices)
- Review personal equipment needed for the kayak, activity and environment
- Prepare kayak for departure: stowing gear securely, and ensuring it is balanced
- How to hold the paddle in correct orientation and grip for effective paddling

Maneuvers: to be performed with appropriate and efficient strokes, while maintaining the trim and balance of the craft

- Enter and launch kayak from shore in a controlled manner, checking for clear departure
- Propel the kayak forward in a straight line 15-20 boat lengths
- Stop the kayak within two boat lengths
- Move the kayak backwards 3-4 boat lengths
- Turn the kayak from a stationary position 180° to the right and left
- Move the kayak sideways 10 feet (3 meters) to each side
- Propel the kayak in a figure of 8 course around markers 3-4 boat lengths apart
- Turn the kayak while maintaining forward motion 90° to the right and left



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- Arrive at destination point, checking for clear approach, and exit the kayak in a controlled and safe manner

Technical Knowledge:

- Review paddling equipment, terminology (kayak and paddle), and care of gear
- Instructor review of additional personal and group gear, including, but not limited to:
 - Environmental supplies (food, water, appropriate clothing, sunscreen, etc.)
 - Navigational and signaling tools (maps, charts, whistle, etc.)
 - Safety and rescue tools
 - Repair kit
 - First aid kit (appropriate to training)
- Review the dangers of paddle sports and how to plan an appropriate course to avoid potential hazardous situations.
- How to avoid and prevent cold water shock, hypothermia and hyperthermia by choosing proper clothing; recognizing and treating early symptoms; 1-10-1 rule.
- Recognize the importance of hydration
- Recognize and appropriately use communication (paddle/oar and whistle) signals
- Review basic navigational rules for inland waterways
- Develop awareness of the group and effective on water management techniques
- Describe best paddling practices: posture, balance, awareness of body-kayak-blade relationship
- Secure the kayak and equipment before leaving unattended, with attention paid to environment and conditions

Safety and Rescue

- Demonstrate awareness of rescue priorities: people, kayak, paddle, gear
- Use safe progressions T-RETHROG (Talk, Reach, THrow, ROw, Go) - including throwable floating aid or throw bag use
- Describe the responsibilities of: the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Identify and demonstrate the use of appropriate rescue and safety gear for the craft and planned activity
- Exit the kayak after a capsized (may include wet exit)
- Rescue self and the kayak using an effective self rescue technique (e.g., swim self and boat to shore, or deep water reentry).
- Rescue a person in the water and capsized kayak using appropriate techniques and equipment for the craft (bailers, pumps, paddle floats, tow lines, etc)
- Perform assisted rescues: boat over boat or side by side or T-rescue or others appropriate to conditions
- Perform assisted re-entry: heel hook or rescue sling or /paddle floats or others appropriate to conditions
- Techniques for bulldozing or towing a kayak or swimmer to shore

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- Group debrief or individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid and CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience



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- Importance of appropriate level of safety and rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport and paddling options
- Local paddling groups and clubs
- Handouts and reference materials
- ACA membership forms
- Course evaluation and participation cards